What Is Claimed Is:

1. A device for side impact detection for a motor vehicle, comprising:

a reflector;

a stiffening pipe connected to the reflector, the stiffening pipe being situated in a side section of the motor vehicle;

at least one sensor situated in the side section of the motor vehicle for determining a side section deformation, the at least one sensor including a distance sensor for measuring a distance to the reflector; and

a control unit for evaluating sensor signals from the at least one sensor, the control unit detecting a side impact as a function of the distance.

2. The device according to claim 1, wherein the distance sensor is an optical sensor.

3. The device according to claim 1, wherein a surface of the stiffening pipe is a reflector.

4. The device according to claim 1, wherein the stiffening pipe is connected to a metal plate as a reflector.

5. The device according to claim 1, wherein, after a start of operation of the device, the at least one sensor carries out an initial measuring procedure to adjust a transmitting power.

6. The device according to claim 5, further comprising a control circuit, the at least one sensor being connected to the control circuit in order to adjust the transmitting power during operation.

7. The device according to claim 1, further comprising a plausibility sensor situated in the side section.